

Sapporo man wins Toastmasters speech contest

The Daily Yomiuri

Kiminari Azuma, 45, a systems engineer from Sapporo, won first place in the Toastmasters District 76 (Japan) International Speech Contest, held at the National Olympics Memorial Youth Center in Yoyogi, Tokyo, on May 20.

Five finalists representing five different divisions in Japan, from Hokkaido to Okinawa Prefecture, made speeches in front of an audience of about 300.

Representing Division A (Hokkaido, Tokyo and Chiba areas), Azuma spoke about his two sons in a speech titled "I Love You." He will now compete at the Inter-District Speech Contest in Phoenix, Ariz., to be held on Aug. 14. If he wins, he will then proceed to the International Speech

Contest to compete for the World Champion of Public Speaking title on Aug. 18.

Ruskyle L. Hawser, an American writer who lives in Tokyo came second. He talked about simplicity in life in a speech titled "The Key." Kazuko Takayama from Okayama Prefecture came third with a speech titled "The Power of Words."

Toastmasters International was founded in 1924 by Ralph Smedley as a nonprofit organization in the United States. There are 85 Toastmasters clubs in this country, with a total of more than 2,000 members. Most of the clubs focus on public speaking in English, but there are 15 Japanese-speaking clubs among the 85 clubs. More details are available at the Web site of Japanese Toastmasters Clubs at www.district76.org.